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Pali Derivations in Burmese.—By H. L. ST. BARBE, B. C. S.

The Burmese have borrowed their alphabet, religion, literature and a large portion of their language from the neighbouring continent. The alphabet was no doubt introduced at a very early period. It has never been analysed with any care, but its square variety approximates more closely to the Asoka and fifth century (B. C.) inscriptions than any later Indian modifications. It was adopted *en bloc*, though the Burmese have never themselves found any use for 12 out of the 34 consonants and have altered several of the sounds, notably the 2nd varga from “ch” and “j” to “s” and “-”, the vowel “ai” into ê (pronounced more or less like the “e” in there) and “o” into “ô” (like the “aw” in “law”). To express the sound of an “o” and “ai,” they invented a new compound, which I propose calling “ui” from the symbols it is apparently composed of. The remaining characters, for my present purpose, will be more conveniently designated by their Indian equivalents.*

The earliest date mentioned in the national chronicle is the foundation of the Sarekhettará kingdom (B. C. 482). Previous to this, lengthy lines of kings with Indian names are mentioned at Saṅgassa and Pañcala, as the old capitals of Tagoung and old Pugán were denominated. There is no adequate reason, so far as I can see, for rejecting the Indian origin of these early kingdoms. The country was in much the same state as Karen-ní or the Kachyen hills are at present; inhabited by a number of petty

* A paper on Burmese Transliteration was contributed by the writer to the R. A. Society and published in their Journal for April 1878.

tribes with scarcely a shred of order, civilization or authority among them. The advent of an Indian prince (be he real or the reverse), with a little band of refugees, would have much the same effect as the advent of a Burmese “mintha” among the Karen Highlanders. He may be the sole element required for order, coherence and organization. The separate clans become a nation, the separate states a kingdom, a dynasty is established, and history commences. The rulers will introduce as far as possible their own language, usages and religion. Their sons and cities will have sonorous Indian titles, and they will import astrologers, sages and as many representatives of their native Pantheon as their subjects can comfortably digest. A hundred years or so, and these will remain the sole testimonies to their foreign extraction. This is exactly what has happened in Burma. The bulk of the Aryan element, no doubt, found its way into the language hundreds of years later through a Pali channel, when Anórahtá in the eleventh century A. D. brought the “Three Baskets” from Thahton and had them translated into the vernacular. But Sanskrit words had entered the language before this, without any connection with Buddhism. The names for the days of the week are derived from a Sanskrit source, though distorted at times beyond recognition. Áṅga, Buddhahú : , Sokrá : , Krásapate :* and Chane are identifiable, but Tanañlá and Tanangánve have as yet defied analysis. So too the signs of the zodiac, such as priccha, karakaṭ, prissa, more nearly resemble the Sanskrit; while such words as khyañse a lion, rasse a ḥishi, athwad̄ (S. thud̄ to cover) a pinnacle, húrá : (S. horá) astrologers, pritta (S. pretá) the dead, missa (S. meṣa) a ram, prassad (S. prásáda) a tower, seem to point to a time when the foreign vocables were written down as they sounded in Burmese, without reference to their etymology. The presence of the “r” also in such words as samuddará, krattiká, amruik (amrita), krammá, drap (darpa), gruih (graha), chakrá, aggirat, bhúmirat, indicate an earlier source than Pali. As time went on, the importations vastly increased, and an estimate of words of Indie extraction as constituting one-seventh of the whole Burmese vocabulary would be rather under than over the actual proportion. Many, no doubt, are corrupted and contorted beyond all knowledge. Captain Latter remarks in his grammar that there is no such thing as orthography in the Burmese language, and no doubt the existence of 12 superfluous characters and the slurred enunciation of final consonants have led to a good deal of confusion. Such forms as vibhak (vipaka), puppa (pubba), phothappa (phoṭhabba), kú (guba), bhavak (bhavaggan̄) are typical instances of

* The change of an initial labial into a guttural is rare in Burmese. The only other instance I know of is *pattará* into *kuttará*. The change of *t* into *s* is common enough.

common errors, and many others will be noticed among my examples. Neither Dr. Judson in his Dictionary nor Dr. Mason in his Pali Grammar can be relied on, and I regret to state that the provincial government is among the worst of offenders. Besides countenancing the most frenzied methods of transliteration, it had the temerity to allow the Education Department to publish a collection of popular Burmese texts with but the scantiest acquaintance with the language. Pali MSS. were exclusively relied on, the result being that it is almost impossible to conceive more orthographical errors being included within a smaller space.

The process of engrafting Aryan vocables on a Mongoloid stock must be more or less clumsy and inadequate. Gotama would scarcely understand ten words together of his own doctrine as recited by a phungyí, and most certainly could not make himself intelligible to a Burmese audience. The character must always be a most unsatisfactory one to adopt for any new dialect or language. In reducing Karen to writing, the American Missionaries had a grand opportunity of introducing the Latin alphabet (with the necessary additions) which was just as intelligible to their converts as any other, and which would have led easily to a general scheme of vernacular transliteration. They were misguided enough, however, to employ Burmese, the consequence being a series of appalling hieroglyphics incomprehensible to all but the contrivers. I hear that Kachyen is to undergo a similar treatment. This is the language spoken by all the Singphos on the borders of Burma and Assam and deserves a better fate than being interred within an ingenious (perhaps) but inscrutable cipher. May I be permitted to record a feeble and, no doubt, ineffective protest? Apart however, from a want of orthoepical precision (to use Dr. Wilson's phrase) there is a certain amount of method and uniformity observed in the appropriation of Pali terms. I have been able to frame a simple set of rules which are tolerably comprehensive and which may be of some use in dealing with future importations. It will be noted (1) that anuswára and the nasals are freely interchangeable, (2) that visarga (which in Burmese is only used as a grave accent after long vowels and nasals) is added without any reference to the original.

I. The word was imported whole.

E. g. kála, sati, utu, gati, ussabha, rathá :, kulá :, khaṇa, upamá.

Often inflected or misspelt.

E. g. ásavó, upaddavo, pakate (pakati), chute (chuti), sare (síri), yújaná (yojanami), hañsá (haṃsa), añsá (aṃsa), parikkhayá (parikkhára),* milak-

* Cf. also Tirichchhan for Tiræchchhána. There was evidently some false analogy deduced from "viriya" another importation.

khu (milakkho), niriya (niraya), mágha (maghá), nagá (nága), akhobhañí (akkhohiñí), kambulwe (kambulo).

II. It was abbreviated,

(a.) if the penultimate vowel was “a” or “i” and the last consonant uncompounded, by changing the vowel into “ui” and dropping the termination.

E. g. phuil (phalañ), buil (balam), gruih (graha), naguiy (nagaram), makuiñ (makañta), rakkhuik (rakkhaka), guiñ : (gaña), kasuiñ (kasina), karuiñ (karanam), ganuiñ (kánanam ?), samuiñ (samaññá ?). But kuiy (káya) is an exception.

“T” was occasionally changed into “k.”

E. g. charuik (charita), amruik (amrita.)

(b.) If the penultimate vowel was neither “a” nor “i,” or if the last consonant was a compound, the final vowel or syllable was dropped.

E. g. adhippáy (adhippáya), apáy (apáyo), dañ (dañda), dát (dátu), upachá (upachára), upade (upadesa), alin (alinda), kañnamú (kañnamúlam), chhan : (chhanda), dhutañ (dhuttañga), pullañ (pullañko), nimit, (nimit-tam), kum (kumbha), vañ (vam̄sa), ekan (ekam̄sa), kan (kaññá).

N. B. In “janí” (janiká) and chhetí (chhetiyam) the í has been lengthened to allow the operation of this rule.

Occasionally the vowel was shortened.

E. g. nam (náma), yan (yáma), amat (amátya), dan (dámam), bhum (bhúmi), atit (atítam).

2. In some cases more than one syllable is dropped.

E. g. upád (upádánam), byañ : (byañjanam), navarat (navaratanam), piñkat (pitakattayam).

3. “o” is changed into “u” in the words—

anulump (anuloma), upus (uposatha), alup (álopa).

4. The vowel is lengthened in the words—

tú (tula), kú (guha), vá (vassam).

5. A penultimate y is often changed into ñ or ê.

[As a final, ñ has 3 sounds in Burmese, the first nearly corresponding to “í,” the second to “ê,” the 3rd (with an anusvára) to “in.”]

E. g. nañ (naya), pachchañ (pachchaya), vinañ (vinaya), ñarê (niraya), sahê (saháya).

6. The letters ñ (with an anusvára), ñ and u are often employed anomalously.

E. g. jañ (jana), abhiñañ (abhiññá), upamañ (upamánam), uyyañ : (uyyánam), sabhañ (sabbhá), bhavañ (bhava), maggañ* (magga), águm

* Dr. Judson derives maggān from maggāṅga. This appears unnecessary and erroneous.

(ágamma), arum (arammaná), nigum : (nigama), saraṇagum (saraṇa gamanam), apud (apada), vevuch (vevachanaṁ), uṇṇalum (uṇṇalamba ?).

III. Occasionally some other change occurred in the word, *viz.*—

(a.) The Burmese substantive prefix “a” was given.

E. g. arup (rúpam), arasa (rasam), akhaṇ (khaṇḍeti).

(b.) The initial vowel was dropped.

E. g. pamá (upamá), lañká (alañkára), dhiṭṭhán (adhiṭṭhánam), bhissit (abhisito), rahan : (araham), numo (anu modaná).

(c.) Some medial alteration took place.

E. g. muigh (megha), adhwān (addhána), bhe : (bhaya), sabho (sabhava), galun (garulo), mahut* (muhuttá), puthui (thúpo ?). For a similar inversion compare danchakú : for chandakú :, krapate for prakate, and perhaps rakhuiñ for kharuiñ.

The above is a brief and imperfect summary of the methods employed in adapting Pali derivatives to the Burmese vernacular. Some of the changes and modifications were necessitated by the character of the language ; others were dictated by euphony. I have not here analysed the reasons for any change, nor have I noticed the specialities or alterations of meaning which many words have assumed in their transfer. Such terms as sañbho (a ship), sañkan : (a chivara), sañkham : (a hermitage), dhúvam (the north star), pariyáy (artifice), charit (expenses), joti (a schismatic) cannot be found with such significations in any Pali or Sanskrit dictionary, and a long list of obviously Indic words could be made up comprising such common names as puñña : (a Brahmin), muṭṭho (a dagoba), rikkhá (provisions), purapuik (a slate &c.), koja (an era), prakkadin (an almanack), which are not to be found at all.

I should mention in concluding that some Pali words are to be found in several forms, such as kammapā kam krammá, káya kaiy, mag magga maggiñ, sarup rup rupa arup, mit mettá, chit cheta, &c. The Burmese are fond also of using a Pali and Burmese word of the same signification to form a sort of aggregative compound.

E. g. mit-chhue (friends), amin aṇa (an order), puṇ-sañṭhán (appearance), amhu kicheha (business), arap-desa (a place), amyak-dosa (anger), &c.

These well exemplify the way in which Pali has become interwoven with the common speech and thought of the people. A thorough knowledge of Burmese would necessitate some acquaintance with its Aryan ally, and one could wish to see a dictionary or grammar undertaken with some recognition of this fact.

* This dropping of the “u” is very common in Burmese as patí :, pachchhui :, &c. for putí :, puchchhui.